DC COMICS™
NIGHTWING™
27
THE NEW 52!
WHO PULLS THE STRINGS OF DICK GRAYSON'S LIFE?
KYLE HIGGINS
WILL CONRAD
CLIFF RICHARDS
In this Style 10/6
THE MARIONETTE!
RATED T
MAR 2014
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So, this is different.
MALI, MALI, MY DEAR. OH, DEAR.
THAT WARDROBE SIMPLY WON'T DO. NOT FOR MY FAVORITE ALICE.
EVERYONE! GATHER 'ROUND FOR DIRECTION!
WE'RE GOING TO SAVE HER.
AND WE'RE GOING TO KILL HIM.
Then again, nothing about Mali has been what I expected.
SEE, I KNEW I PREFERRED THE MARCH HARE FOR A REASON.
-KOFF KOFF-
POOM
THE HATS AND HELMETS HAVE MIND CONTROL BUGS INSIDE. SAME WITH THE EARPIECES.
I'D PUT MONEY ON IT.
IF I HAD MONEY.
WHAT ABOUT THE COP AND THE OTHER GUY?
And by other guy, I mean my roommate. Long story.
LET'S FIND OUT. TRUCE?

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

KYLE HIGGINS WRITER • WILL CONRAD AND CLIFF RICHARDS ART
PETE PANTAZIS COLORS • CARLOS M. MANGUAL LETTERS • CONRAD AND PANTAZIS COVER
SCRIBBLENAUTS VARIANT COVER BY JON KATZ, AFTER SCOTT McDANIEL
DARREN SHAN ASSISTANT EDITOR • RACHEL GLUCKSTERN EDITOR MIKE MARTS GROUP EDITOR
NIGHTWING CREATED BY MARV WOLFMAN AND GEORGE PÉREZ

OBVIOUS TIE-IN GIMMICK ASIDE, I NEVER GOT THE "HATS FOR MIND CONTROL."
I MEAN, TALK ABOUT YOUR EASY TARGET TO--
THWACK
KRAK
GAH!
UHN!
SO, GOOD THING YOU'RE BROKE, HUH?
OH, NIGHTWING THINKS HE'S FUNNY.
HM. AT LEAST SOMEONE DOES.
WILL YOU ALL HURRY UP AND PERFORATE HIM, PLEASE?!

OH, TWO STICKS.
SOMEONE'S OVERCOMPENSATING.
KRAK
WHACK
SO OVERCOMPENSATING.
GUH!
HEY, IT'S A BALANCE THING.
So how the hell is Hatter doing this?
ALL THIS HELP AND IT'S NO HELP AT ALL. -SIGH-
Okay, Michael's head is clear. No electronics, no earpieces.
BRAKAKAKAKA
DOWN!

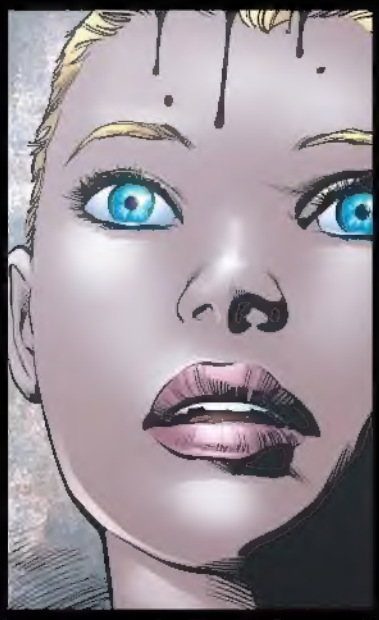
KSSH
KSSH
KSSH
KSSH
WHAT...?
NO!
AH... WHAT THE... HELL...
YEAH, I'M WONDERING THE SAME--
THE PHONE...
HATTER'S CONTROLLING THEM THROUGH THE CELL PHONES!
THIS ONE HAS AN OPEN CALL.

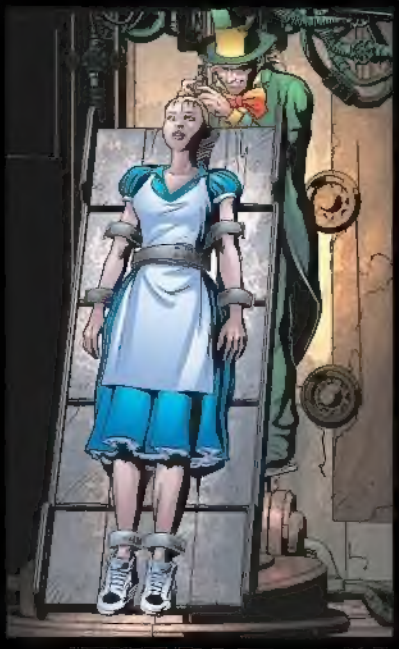
OKAY, SO THE PHONES ARE REFRESHING THE MIND CONTROL SIGNAL. THAT MEANS IT HAS TO BE *INDUCTION* OR--
IT DOESN'T *REALLY* MATTER RIGHT NOW, DOES IT?
AGH... MY HEAD...
HM.
NO, I GUESS IT *DOESN'T*.
GRAB THE COP AND LET'S GO!
POOM
POOM

WEEHOO
WEEHOO
WEEHOO

OF COURSE. *NOW* THE COPS SHOW UP...
WEEHOO
WEEHOO
WEEHOO

HUH--?



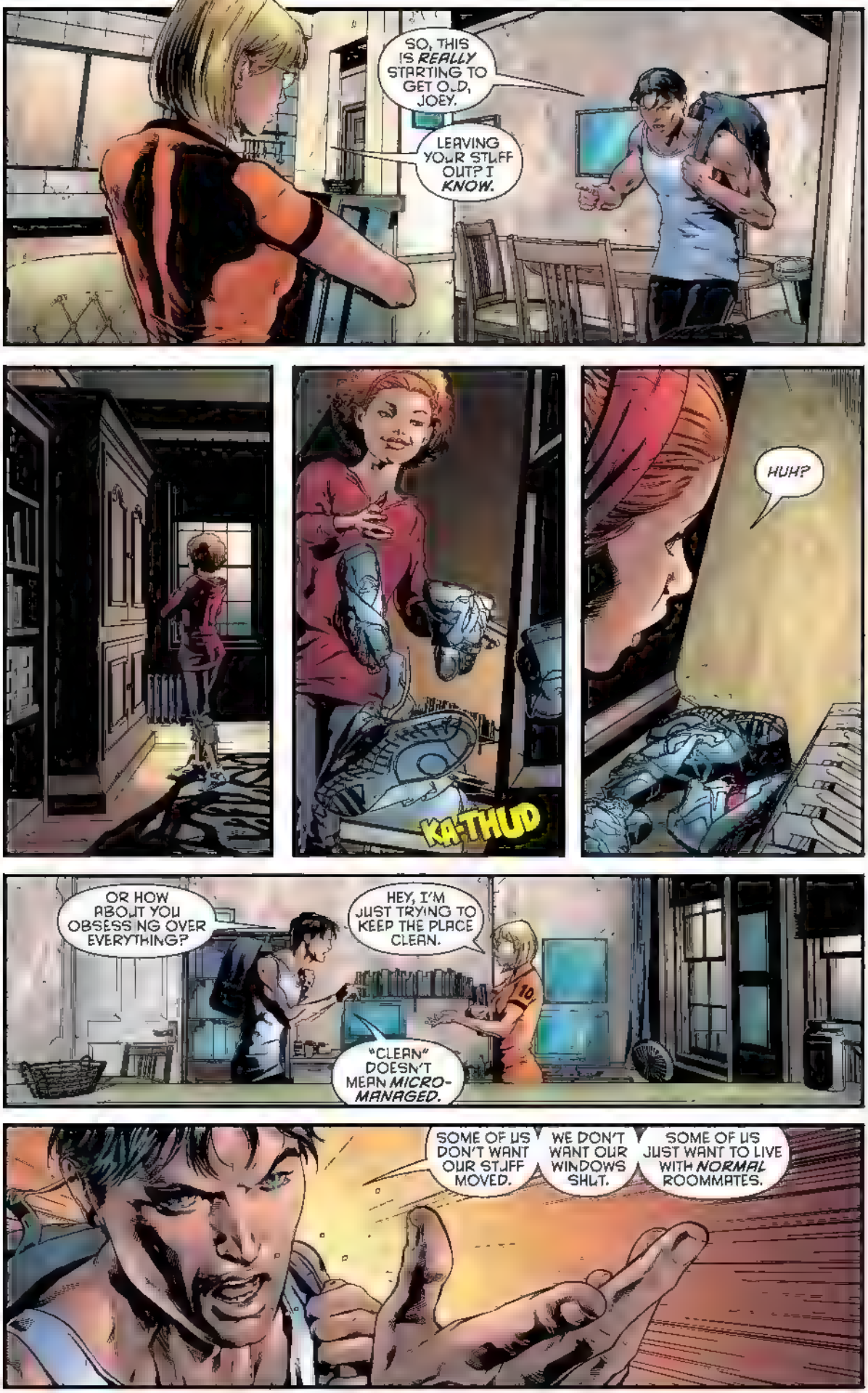


"SNAPSHOTS.
FRAGMENTS."

THOSE ARE ALL I *REALLY* REMEMBER.
HOTEL
HELL, DEPENDING ON MY MOOD, MALI'S NOT EVEN MY REAL *NAME.*
THE DOCTORS CALL IT "PERSONALITY SLIPPING."
THEN THERE'S THE "MIMIC" THING. I PICK UP WHAT I *SEE.* LIKE HOW TO USE THOSE *STICKS* YOU CARRY.
WHAT KIND OF DOCTORS HAVE YOU *BEEN* TO?
PSYCHIATRISTS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, NEUROLOGISTS... TAKE YOUR PICK.
THE ONLY THING THEY AGREE ON IS THAT THE HATTER *BROKE* ME.
AND HE'S PROBABLY THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN PUT THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER.
ASSUMING THEY *WANNA* BE TOGETHER.
WHAT ABOUT THE KANIUM?
IT HELPS ME STAY BASELINE. SORT OF. BUT IT'S NOT A *FIX.*
IT'S ALSO HIGHLY CONTROLLED. I'D NEED TO BE IN A *HOSPITAL* TO GET IT LEGITIMATELY. AND I'M *DONE* BEING A PRISONER.

NOT TO MENTION, EVERY TIME I'VE *TRIED* THAT, *HE'S* FOUND ME.
SORRY, I'M JUST...REALLY TIRED.
TIRED OF RUNNING. OF *STEALING.*
I JUST...
...I JUST WANT IT ALL TO *STOP.*
WORRY
ANXIETY
TENSION
FEAR

If there's even a chance Hatter can fix Mal, then she has to take it.
But she doesn't have to do it alone.
Before I leave, we make plans for that night. To track down the Hatter together.
When she asks why I want to help, I tell the truth. I feel bad for her.
NNG!
After all--
--nobody should have to be a prisoner in their own life.
YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME...
SO WHERE DO YOU WANT ALL THESE SHOES?
DICK'S ROOM. END OF THE HALL.
IS HE GOING TO CARE WE'RE MOVING THEM?
WELL, HE SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT THEM OUT IF HE WANTED TO--
HEY. WHAT'S GOING ON?
JUST DECLUTTERING. JEN'S MOVING A BUNCH OF STUFF TO YOUR ROOM.
OKAY...DO ME A FAVOR, JEN? HANG OUT THERE FOR A MINUTE?
SURE.


SO, THIS IS *REALLY* STARTING TO GET OLD, JOEY.
LEAVING YOUR STUFF OUT? I *KNOW*.
KA-THUD
HUH?
OR HOW ABOUT YOU OBSESSING OVER EVERYTHING?
HEY, I'M JUST TRYING TO KEEP THE PLACE CLEAN.
"CLEAN" DOESN'T MEAN *MICRO-MANAGED*.
SOME OF US DON'T WANT OUR STUFF MOVED.
WE DON'T WANT OUR WINDOWS SHUT.
SOME OF US JUST WANT TO LIVE WITH *NORMAL* ROOMMATES.

WHOA.
YOU KNOW WHAT? IF YOU'RE SO UNHAPPY, START LOOKING FOR A DIFFERENT PLACE.
HEY, GREAT IDEA.
FOR ONCE, WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE.

DREXLER CHEMICAL.
I'M JUST... A LITTLE WORRIED. EIGHT WORKERS IN THE HOSPITAL? TWO OF THEM SHOT?
NOT TO MENTION THE POLICE SHUT DOWN THE WAREHOUSE.
YES. IT WAS AN...UNFORTUNATE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS. BUT THERE'S NOTHING OFFICIALLY LINKING ME TO DREXLER. WE NEEDN'T WORRY.
THAT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SAY. YOU'RE NOT THE CEO.
YOUR CHOICE OF TEA, SIR?
AHH, WE'LL GO WITH "TRANQUILITY" TODAY. ALWAYS A FAVORITE. THE JASMINE REALLY COMPLEMENTS THE KETAMINE.
LOOK, JERVIS--YOU BEING HERE ISN'T PART OF THE DEAL. THE DEAL WAS FOR THE CHEMICALS AND--
THEN I'M CHANGING THE DEAL! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I WANT MY ALICE BACK!
AND I'M NOT LEAVING UNTIL I GET HER.

By the time I meet Marionette, she's already tracked down the Hatter.
By the sound of it, his hooks are deep into Drexler Chemical.
The plan is straightforward enough--a "snatch-and-grab" on the Mad Hatter.
We'll deal with how he can fix Mail once we're in the clear.
ALARM
SORRY.
GUH!
EEEEEEET
WAIT, DON'T--!
Although, when is anything straightforward?
EEEEEEEEEET

EEEEEEEEEET
WHAT IS THAT?! WHAT'S GOING ON?!
Two guards in and it hits me.
ACK!
All of a sudden I understand what she meant...
...by "I want this to be over."
NNG!
CRAAAAK
HELLO.
Hatter's a homicidal sociopath, but I can't let him die.
I can't let her kill him.

I'VE BEEN ROBBED! ROBBED!
Of course, that might not be what this is at all.
I'LL SLICE HER THROAT AND DRAIN THE TEA OUT OF HER!
OKAY, I'M OFFICIALLY CONFUSED.
SHE STOLE YOUR TEA?
EVERY LAST BAG!
-SNIFF-
Kanium.
OHHH, WAIT A SECOND. I KNOW THAT FACE.
DID SHE TELL YOU HOW MUCH SHE WANTED IT TO STOP? HOW TERRIBLE I'D BEEN TO HER?
OH, THAT CLEVER GIRL. THAT'S MY MAL....

"...THAT'S MY ALICE."
I wa t around just long enough to see the Police pull Hatter off the wall.
I'll be curious to see whether the C.P.D. can make any charges stick.
Almost as curious as I am about where Mali ended up.
It's stupid to think she'd still be here. But I check anyway.
The last t me I was at this hotel, she was telling the truth about wanting a cure.
Turns out, he's been using Drexler for years, to supply chemicals for his teas. Lysergic Acid, Ketamine...
...Kanium.
Or at least, one part of her was.
But with enough of the Hatter's tea to last a long while...
...I may never know for sure.

LATER.
--SO AFTER THE M.R.I. AND THE BRAIN SCAN, THEY LET US GO HOME. I FEEL OKAY NOW, BUT MAN... WHAT A WEIRD COUPLE OF DAYS.
I MEAN, WHO EVER TH NKS THEY'RE GO NG TO BE POSSESSED BY THE MAD HATTER?
GEEZ. THAT SOUNDS TERRIBLE, MICHAEL.
WHAT ABOUT MAXWELL? IS HE OKAY?
YEAH, HE'S FINE. I MEAN, ASIDE FROM BEING TICKED AT ME.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THE WHOLE HATTER SITUATION...
...FEEL NG SO HELPLESS...SO POWERLESS...IT WAS ONE OF THE SCAR EST THINGS I'VE EVER BEEN THRO GH.
IT MADE ME REALIZE HOW M CH I RESENTED BEING MAXWELL'S PAWN. I TOLD HIM I WAS DONE HELPING HIM, AND F THAT TANKED MY CAREER... SO BE IT.
GOOD FOR YOU.
YOU KNOW, A LOT OF T MES PEOPLE GET MANIP LATIVE LIKE THAT BECA SE SOMETHING BIG BLOWS P IN THEIR LIFE.
THEY CLING EXTRA HARD TO WHATEVER LAST SHREDS THEY CAN, TO WHATEVER THEY DO HAVE CONTROL OVER.
I GUESS WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT IT WAS PROBABLY NOTHING PERSONAL AGAINST YOU OR--
UH, YOU ST LL THERE?
YEAH... YEAH. SORRY, I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE...

HEY...
HEY.
LISTEN, I'M...REALLY SORRY ABOUT BEFORE. I'VE BEEN PRETTY FRUSTRATED WITH OTHER STUFF. AND TIRED. NOT THAT IT'S ANY KIND OF EXCUSE.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID ANY OF THAT.
AND I'M SORRY TOO, DICK. I DON'T MEAN TO GET ALL O.C.D.
THINGS HAVE BEEN... HARD LATELY.
YEAH...I KIND OF GET THAT FEELING. I MEAN, I KNOW YOU LIKE TO WORK FROM HOME SOMETIMES...
THANKS.
...BUT WITH HOW MUCH YOU'VE BEEN HERE THE LAST COUPLE WEEKS, AND NOW WATCHING JEN...
...DID YOU LOSE YOUR JOB?

THEY...SAID MY PERSONALITY WASN'T... A FIT...
OH MAN, FORGET THEM. I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT CODING, BUT I DO KNOW HOW AWESOME YOU ARE.
YOU'RE TOTALLY GONNA FIND A BETTER GIG. I KNOW IT.
AND I'M HERE TO HELP, ANY WAY I CAN.
-SNIFF- THANKS...
HELLO? ANYBODY HERE?
OH. SORRY...I DIDN'T HEAR THE DOOR.
DICK, THIS IS GREG AND CHERYL. THEY'RE JEN'S PARENTS.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
YOU TOO. AND SO YOU KNOW, JEN'S BEEN GREAT.
SHE'S WELCOME HERE ANY TIME.
SHE'S BEEN BEHAVING?
PFFT. SHE'S BEEN DRAWING.
OH, YEAH? ANYTHING WE CAN SEE?
NOPE.
IT'S A SECRET.
SEE YOU TOMORROW, DICK
YEAH... SEE YOU TOMORROW...
NEXT ISSUE:
REPERCUSSIONS!

HERO FIGHT!
BREAKING NEWS FROM CHANNEL 52--WE ARE GETTING REPORTS THAT BATMAN AND SUPERMAN ARE SQUARING OFF IN A BATTLE OF EPIC PROPORTIONS!
WHAT COULD HAVE CAUSED THESE FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE TO TURN ON EACH OTHER? WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT AN ALIEN TYRANT NAMED "MONGUL" MAY BE INVOLVED!
CHECK BACK FOR AN UPDATE ON "WHEN HEROES ATTACK...EACH OTHER!" ONLY ON CHANNEL 52

NAHGA